

# DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Potpourri

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Welcome to DIPLOMACY DIGEST, the zine with no games. Ever. There's also no movie reviews, no science fiction, no coverage of other wargames, etc. But when it comes to the game and hobby of Diplomacy, I cover it all. The backbone of this operation is reprints. I have an enormous collection of dazines, well over 7000, with a great deal of European material, going all the way back to the start of the postal hobby in the early 60s. I reprint this material, usually gathered in theme issues, along with my comments. DD also publishes occasional original essays. I also do "The Zine Column", which features hobby news and my commentary on it. This is about as close to a pure-Dippy zine as you will get in the hobby. If you've any questions, please don't hesitate to write and ask.

Last call for MaryCon, host for DipCon 1986. For full details and information forms write Ken Peel 8703 First Ave #t-2 Silver Spring MD 20910. A lot of the people from the postal hobby will be there, so this is your chance to meet them. Past MaryCons have been very successful, and I'm sure this one will be no exception.

## THE ZINE COLUMN # 92

Enclosed inside is a ballot for the Runestone Poll. This is the oldest North American poll, and in terms of the number of voters, it's the one with the widest support. Unlike other polls, it does not restrict you in how many (e.g. zines) you can vote for; you can vote for all the zines you've seen. Some have argued that polls are useless or meaningless or whatever. And people will make of their results what they will. But polls are a great equalizer: Everyone gets an equal vote. In so many of the hobby's activities, the publishers have more influence; they speak with a magnified voice (their zines). Here, the customer speaks.

There was some brouhaha last year over how the Runestone Poll was run. Bruce was ridiculed for sending ballots to people who, shall we say, were unlikely to vote. He was similarly scorned for sending ballots to his friends who were likely to vote (makes a lot of sense, huh?) A big fuss was made over his accepting telephone votes. Mind you, for over 20 years, GMs have been routinely accepting telephone game orders, a much more sensitive item than a mere poll ballot. And Bob Olsen complained that some of those voting were "marginal" or "unknown" people (to him), etc. Real high-powered criticisms. Please take the time to vote. Many GMs and pubbers do consider these results to be of some significance. If a pubber or GM has been doing a good job, this is your way to tell him --- and the hobby --- about it. And if not, well, sometimes a quick kick in the pants can turn things around.

Also included with this issue is a ballot for the three awards run by Larry Peery. Just circle your choice and sign. Larry has refused himself to be nominated for the DMMA, and asks people not to write in a vote for him. I'm going to reluctantly comply. He also asks people not to deface the ballots. In the past, zines such as Whitestonia blanked Bruce Linsey's name out. Those wishing to make a financial donation should make their check payable to Fred Davis, Jr; and send it to Fred (1427 Clairidge Rd Baltimore, MD 21207) or to Larry.

The 1986 Marco Poll is being run by Dan Stafford, 1637 Hampton Knoll Akron OHIO 44313, with a deadline of June 6, 1986. List the five best players, the four best zines, and the two best subzines. While I support this poll, it does have some significant limitations: Obviously, it strongly favors the zines with the highest circulations. More subtly, restricting the number you can vote for skews the results. If you get 4 zines, then your 4th place zine is actually your least favorite zine! If I get 20 zines, my 4th favorite zine is one of my most favorite zines. But both get an equal count as a 4th place zine.

Chris Carrier 1215 P Street #12, Sacramento CA 95814 is one of those rare people in the hobby who is quite interested in the "feuding", but who does not take sides, and who tried to find some humor in it. Anyhow, he's now running the "1985 Feuder Awards" Nominees for Feud Letter/Editorial of the Year are Linsey 33 1/2 page job in NFA 32/33, Boardman's "the End of Brux" in Granstark #508, and Steve Hutton's devastating response to The Not for Hire #1, in NFA #34. Nominees for Feud Item of the Year are DW #39, DW #401 (the fake), and the Missing Child Poster in Whitestonia #101. Novice Feuders of the Year are Chris Carrier and Bruce McIntyre. Feud Wimps of the Year are Doug Beyerlein, Keen Peel, and Larry Peery. Chris considers all of them crybabies for their grouching about the feud. Get those votes in by May 15.

Some changes in various zines have been announced recently. In Fol Si Fie #170, Randolph Smyth announces "I've finally decided to take definite steps to wind this zine down." Gynics will point out that Randolph has made such announcements before. The next game will be the last. Eventually, Randolph plans to make PSF "an irregular, occasional publication featuring articles, letters, and commenting on hobby news" Randolph's forte is the psychology of the game, the dance of negotiation, and in that, he has no peers. I'll be getting PSF as long as the zine exists. In Europa Express #51, Gary Coughlan announces more immediate changes: The zine will appear henceforth 5 times a year. EE features a letter column with an unusually large number of contributors, a revolving collection of subzines, Gary's very readable, and leisurely history of WWI, original essays by his readers, and in general, one of the fattest reading zines in the hobby, edited with a confident touch. In Costaguana Vol 10, #17, Conrad von Metzke says that a switch from 3-week to 4-week intervals is "under serious consideration" --- in other words, he's going to do it. This issue was an outlandish 59 pages, but even normally, the zine is quite large. What's more, CVM does a great deal of the writing himself. Conrad is one of the very few people in the hobby who are on occasion capable of writing which I would call professional rather than amateur (the only other pubbers I would put in this category are Richard Sharp, Rod Walker, and Pete Birka). And in No Fixed Address #37, Steve Hutton announces that he will no longer try to adhere to a 5-week schedule. Altho the games will go out (by flyer if need be) right after the deadline, the issues will come out whenever they are ready.

To you guys I say, "The more the better", but do what you need to do to keep the zine going. I'm an archivist, and I've seen the birth and death of dozens of zines. Putting out a zine at a pace the publisher is not comfortable with is suicidal foolishness. This all-or-nothing mentality has killed zines.

And while I'm at it, I might as well say what is de facto practice around here: DIPLOMACY DIGEST is not a monthly zine, 1984 and 1985 each featured only nine issues each, and I expect 1986 to be the same. Outside of some European zines, I trade only with publishers who really want trades, or zines which are far more expensive than DD, so there are few of those.

What else? Ed Wrobel has resumed editing Politeesse, a zine he originally founded; Ken Peel will continue as publisher.... Yet another Canadian zine, Buffalo Steak Tartare, comes to us from Linda Carson and Jim Gardner, continuing a long-standing Canadian tradition of team publishing. Aside from dippy, major topics seem to be Role-playing games cooking, fiction, music --- as much as they could cram into this impressive first issue (#1, 10 Young St. East, Waterloo Ont Canada N2L2L3, 10/\*10) ...20 Years On, the British equivalent of our Zine Directory, is no more, but in its place is Zine With No Name, a strange name not to have, from Martin Le Fevre 1 Wellesley Nautical School Blyth, Northumberland NE243PF England, covering dipzines, FRP zines, hobby services, and even a "Who's Who" I'm listed there, under "March" Berch as "Leading Diplomacy theoretician --- American of course." Of course. He did fairly well on the entries for the American hobby except for Buchanan, Michalski, and Walker, whose micro-bios are all out of date. To the US, it about 50 pence.

What else? Jim Burgess, head Honcho of the U.S. Orphan Service, now has two assistants, Scott Hanson and Steve Langley. Jim reports that the NSWG games and the Concert of Europe Games have all been rehoused, and some GMed games are being looked into. Liberterrean is being folded again, this time by Kevin Kozlowski. If you, too, would like to try your hand at folding Liberterrean, Kevin's the man to see...

Melinda Folley is setting an amazing record. Last Fall, in Everything #65, she was in 13 out of the 26 games starts. When there was a breather with #66, only 2 out of 23. In the recent issue, #67, she has come roaring back with 12 out of 30 games, including 4 with Turkey (the totals exclude games she GMed, and E-Mail games). I know of no one in hobby history who has entered so many games in such a short period of time. When the next E comes out, I'll have the annual total for you.

And speaking of manic hobby involvement, Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashuelot St. Apt 3, Dalton MA 01226, is collecting material for a new Publisher's Handbook. He's interested in essays on Gming or pubbing. He's got quite a bit of material already, so you might want to check first with him if you think someone else might have written on that topic. Deadline for submissions is May 9.

Steve Feinowski is now the "apprentice RNC and heir apparent", as Bill Quin will be relinquishing the post later this year. So far as I know, Bill is the first RNC to do such a gradual transition --- a good innovation....

Mark Larzelere 7607 Fontainebleau Dr #2352 New Carrollton MD 20784 is planning to run a game of Postal Maxopoly; contact him if you are interested... Fred Hyatt, 60 Grandview Place, Montclair, N.J. 07043 has restarted publication of his variant zine The Home Office, and has openings in Colonia VI, Vounstown IV, and regular dip. Alas, Fred has restarted the numbering of the zine all over with one, a stunt last pulled by Ethil the Frog some years back, to universal but unsuccessful scorn... In #2 he prints results of a rating system for Colonia, which put him,

surprise surprise, at #1. There's been quite a bit of that phenomenon going around... Dolchstoss #97 has some exceptionally interesting endgame statements for UBG. The game was won by Italy (Paul McGivern) who made France his first victim. Fortified with gains there, he attacked Austria in force, allied with Germany to push back Russia and mop up the minor powers, then stab his ally for the win --- all this in a game with a very strong field ... Lee Kendler has announced that the aforementioned Fred Hyatt will be taking over as the new Boardman Number Custodian, as of the beginning of June. Lee has done an excellent job of getting this operation on a more sound footing.

DW #42 has arrived, 71 pages fat, along with a supplement with ballots, etc. The issue has a mini-theme on "Maritime Strategy", with about 20 pages devoted to this, including an overview by J.C. Hodgins, three by me, the history of the convoy and its use by Rod Walker, and more. Lew Pulsipher has an interesting variant which attempts to simplify the board rather than add to it, a cheerful and instructive account of a debacle by Steven Coutemanche, a look at some personality types by Tom Hurst, and much more. There were also a few items DW could have done without, such as an essay in Spanish, a humor item by Linsey, and a quiz by Peery, but its such a big issue that these items hardly matter. There is, however, nothing by Kathy Byrne. Instead, Larry has a letter to the readers, saying that Kathy had resigned. It notes that Larry (who is a flexible and open minded person, in my view) had suggested that instead she take a sabbatical. "She seemed agreeable to that", he adds, but "at that point the conversation started to go downhill", for reasons that Larry declined to give, with the result that Kathy did resign. Her reason for doing so was not printed, altho Larry notes that Kathy has "many times in the past" requested to resign. I might add that on a couple of occasions, Kathy has challenged me to try to get Larry to replace her, something I refused to do. So she's now done it directly. Her term was thus DW #39-#42, even shorter than her run with the RNC job and the Orphan Director job. Larry will now take over that position himself, so that its back to one person doing the zine. He says, "In time I may attempt to recruit 2 individuals to take over as DW's news and feature editors" If you're interested, don't wait for an invitation. Contact him now, and set forth some of your ideas.

One other thing I wanted to comment on, a propos the discussion later this issue about whether rating systems really do differ all that much: The issue gives the recent results for the DTRS rating system, in which I rated second. In the other one, IPR, I'm not listed at all in the top 21 (and I'm probably not in the top 50). By contrast, Kathy Byrne, another excellent player, is #3 on the IPR, but isn't in the top 21 on the DTRS.

In Kaissa #109, Dave Staples (who long ago published The Rigot) reports that he ran the Avalon Hill microcomputer version of Diplomacy for 8 hours, giving 33 games, in which the computer played all 7 powers. Results: E-9, T-8, R-7, F-6, and A, I, and G, 1 win each. Dave argues that this shows how unbalanced the game really is, but I think Elmer Hinton's view is more accurate; the microcomputer version is "so badly designed" that no conclusions can be drawn. The game, as its played, has much more balance, and in particular, the microcomputer version seems to have a tremendous bias against the central powers... Malcolm Smith, formerly of England and then Belgium, is now publishing Bohemian Rhapsody from Norway. He will thus become, I believe, the first person to publish a dipzine regularly from three countries... This wraps up an unusually long edition of TZC. Two pages is more typical, but a lot has happened.

((Lets kick things off with this exchange of views from Greatest Hits #24, June 1976))

Richard Walkerdine: You asked me a long time ago why I let John Lettice back into my games. I've finally found the time to answer.

I tried to organize a comprehensive black-list a few montas ago with the Help of Bill Orr .... under the aegis of IDA/UK, but so far there has been absolutely no response. That's fair enough, and if nobody wants one there's no point in having one, but if we don't have one then I can't really see how you can query my allowing Lettice play in Mad Policy without your appearing to be rather hypocritical. By your silence on the matter of blacklists I assume you don't want one --- yet you moan at me for not taking notice of other people's blacklists!

John Lettice may have dropped out of dozens and dozens of games, but he's never put a foot wrong in MP. He played in two of the early MP games all the way thru to completion/elimination without any trouble. There are scarcely any other grounds for refusing him another game, are there?

Without a universal blacklist (which I doubt I would support anyway!) I have no intention of penalizing a former Mad Policy ((player)) whose record in MP is totally faultless - far better than yours in fact...As long as John Lettice behaves himself in MP (as he has always done for something like 3 years now) he can do what the hell he likes elsewhere - its his business what goes on elsewhere, not mine, and, I suggest, not yours either.

As for the National Games Club, John certainly was a member and in fact was proposing to start a NGC zine at just about the time you took over from me as DipSec - I must admit its just as well that he disappeared before he could actually get it under way. I don't think he is a member anymore. ((GH's editor then replied))

Pete Birks: Richard, you have completely missed my point. The fact that he dropped out of x games, though annoying, is, as you say, irrelevant if his behavior in MP is exemplary. However, the fact that he dropped out of a hobby, by ceasing to produce Bolshevik Star, and by failing to refund subscriptions, makes it very selfish to allow him back into the hobby at all unless he pays his debts. Just because he doesn't owe you money does not mean that other debts don't exist - he owes me about 60p, and if we multiply that by about 50 subscribers, we get a tidy sum. This "he can do what he likes elsewhere" attitude sounds like the "I'm alright Jack" phenomenon. The fact that he owes me money makes it my business, and I would like it back, as, I'm sure would all those other fiddled subscribers. If you want to let someone like Lettice play in MP, feel free to do so, but if someone else did you over for a few quid, don't expect other people to back you up, Richard, 'cos you haven't done it for them. And finally, so his record in MP is better than mine - what about his record elsewhere --- is Greatest Hists still publishing? Is Bolshevik Star?

((I suspect that many, if not most long term GMs keep blacklists of people who they will not permit to play in their zine. These lists are not usually printed, in fact, they aren't usually talked about (altho I believe Conrad von Metzke made passing reference recently to his), but they are very real. They are usually composed of people who have done things that the GM just doesn't care to tolerate; and it doesn't have to be anything so drastic as failing to produce a refund or even NMRing out of a game. Joint blacklists have been proposed from time to time, but never have gotten anywhere for the understandable reason that GM's standards vary so widely on what it takes to justify this, what it takes to get off the list, etc.))

((The question of whether "hobby" actions outside one's own zine ought to have any effect on whether one plays in one's own zine has arisen from time to time. One occasion when it did arise was the campaign to persuade hobby GMs not to let Buddy Tretick (Bernie Oaklyn) enter new games until he ended certain odious practices. GMs split rather sharply on the principle involved. Some felt that an offense against some people was an offense against everyone. Others felt that they themselves had to be burned before any action in their own zine was justified. One GM (Jim Benes) expressed to me the view that every publisher was the Lord of his own castle, and had no accountability elsewhere. He accepted the accuracy of the many charges against Tretick, yet felt that was totally

irrelevant to his own zine. He and I discussed this for some time (eventually, he too got burned, rendering the topic moot!). Most people who have come back into the hobby after a messy fold have made attempts to set financial affairs straight. It often happens, tho that if a few years have gone by, most of the people who were burned have either left the hobby, or mentally written the whole thing off, so they are unsure of what they are owed.))(A brief discussion of black lists appeared recently in Its A Trap #10))



((The hobby will soon have a new Publisher's Handbook, which I'll be reviewing here as soon as it comes out. So I figure this would be a good time to reprint a review of the last one. This is by Doug Ronson and appeared in Paroxysm #25, March 21, 1976))

This publication is not quite correctly name --- It should be called the IDA Publisher's And Gamesmaster's Handbook ((the title didn't have that "and Gamesmaster's"). It is also useful for the player in understanding his relationship with the GM. Its 28 pages include articles ranging from running Duplicators, to variant information and hobby services.

The publication itself is produced by fotooffset of a quality almost as good as DIPLOMACY WORLD but unfortunately there are quite a lot of typos. This seems mainly do to the fact that Lakofka, who published the Handbook and who wrote about half the articles was being pressured and simply did not have time to achieve perfection. Sometimes the articles had to be continued in a corner of the page following; this is a slight but unavoidable irritation.((So far, he has presented three criticisms, all of them pretty minor. He thereby gives the impression that he doesn't have any major problems with the Handbook))

It begins with lectures concerning the costs (in terms of both time and money) and requirements of starting up a Diplomacy zine. It is well written but a little impersonal. Next follows a discussion of the three main methods of reproduction (spirit, mimeo, and offset) ((spirit-ditto)), including an article by Rod Walker on spirit entitled "Purple your fingers, purple your nose, purple your forehead, even your toes ..." Canadians be warned, however, the prices are substantially ((higher??)) here. The highest cost listed by Len is usually the best discount price you'll get in Canada. Ditto machines cost as much used here as they do used in the States. If possible, buy a reconditioned machine from a recognized dealer...((One of the biggest changes in the hobby in the past ten years has been the virtual disappearance of Ditto. At one time, Ditto was the most popular form, now I doubt there's a dozen ditto zines in the entire hobby)).

After the first 9 pages there is no material on the actual publishing end of the hobby (what else can you say?) The rest of the booklet discusses such matters as House rules. (That article is a good one, but doesn't tell you how to formulate the rules. Probably the best way to do it is to get hold of several copies of HRs and model yours around those, the article, and your own personality and personal philosophy). ((And then take what you've written, and show it to a few friends of your who are very experienced players and/or GMs. They may spot inconsistencies, omissions, impractical ideas, etc)) The following 11 pages cover everything one would want to know about GMing. It is a comprehensive section with information on all of the problems ((many of the problems would be more like it)) which would confront you as a GM and how to solve them. Finally, the Handbook is completed by articles on Variant and Hobby services and the Boardman Numbers.

The Handbook is recommended to players planning to start publishing or have started in the last few months. I would have appreciated having the publication when I started, but I had to learn the hard way (back when I was using mimeo masters I didn't realize that you typed them without using the typewriter ribbon --- the result was less than perfect quality!) ((It's not unusual, in a publication like this, for a single piece of advice to be worth the entire price of the publication.))

Experienced publishers and players will find the handbook interesting and of

some value. Players might learn to appreciate from it the trials and trivializations ((sic??)) of GMing and publishing ((I also think that a better understanding of how publishers do what they do will make players more cooperative)). The price, however seems a little high especially if you are the the group listed immediately above (...\$2 for IDA members, 50¢ extra for non-members). It seems to me that irresponsible people who simply start up publishing on the spur of the moment won't buy the handbook at that price. I thought that one of the main purposes of the publication was to discourage publishers who are not aware of what they are getting into. Not many of this group, tho, will buy it at that price.

On the whole, well done Len!

((On the whole, its an excellent publication. Its main drawbacks are that its now long since out of print, that some of it is obsolete, and that too much of it was written by one person --- Ien wrote 15 of the 26 articles. One of these I'll reprint next:))

## Handling Protests

LWL

During the course of the game you will almost surely make some errors. The players will point these out to you, when they find them, and you must react correctly.

First let's speak of the protests themselves. There are no problems with a polite letter pointing out what a player believes is an error and asking you to check the material to see who is correct. However there will be times when a player will overreact--you must quell any desire to reply in kind. DO point out, by personal letter, that you acknowledge his protest but that you will not tolerate anything but a business tone in any future protest. Retain his protest in your files. Inform him that abusive language and/or personal insults will result in his dismissal from the game. Be polite but be firm. Novice players often will jump on you and a calm reaction by you will probably stop any future problem. If another outburst does occur I suggest the use of the IDA Ombudsman before the matter goes any further. Remove a player for abusive language only in consultation with others and with documentation in your possession. Always keep YOUR cool.

If you receive a phone call from a player about a ruling or misadjudication do not let him force you into any decision over the phone. He may 'demand' a resolution at that moment but do not buckle to such a demand. Say that you will take his call under consideration and that you will, if necessary, consult with another GM. Do not accept any ambush over the phone. Tell him that either he talks to you in a civil tone or you will hang up. Don't yell back at him--no matter how tempted you may be to do so. Let us say that rude letters and calls are few and far between but they do happen. Some players react as if you have purposefully tried to do them in because of some error.

When a protest is about a misadjudication the solution is usually very simple. The 1971 Rulebook will handle almost any problem.

You should require information on ALL GM errors by return mail. Thus if a deadline extension is required you can make it before the old deadline has lapsed. Simple errors

often do not need a deadline extension. Your houserules should provide solutions for simple types that are observable by all players.

When there is a complex ruling in a game it is always good to explain it with the move. This often saves trouble later.

The greatest problem in protests will involve procedural rulings. You must be fair but always be equally harsh. Never allow a late move, for example, and then say no more late moves. Never change a season but then say that the rule no longer applies. If you allow something once you must allow it later--remember that. Do NOT try to be the good Samaritan, this will bite you sooner or later. Do not volunteer to do anything unless there 1) is a protest, or 2) you have made an error.

If you write in your magazine that you will do one thing and then do that thing. I will give you a recent example. In a magazine there was a gamemaster and a guest gamemaster. The Publisher said that builds and removals were to be sent to him, instead of the Guest GM. This was done. One player sent his build to the Guest GM. The Publisher, in the meantime, publishes the Winter with no build received from one player and calls for the Spring. Spring moves are sent in and one player (the one who sent his build to the wrong place) protested. The Guest GM says that he will include the build. I protested that since it was the player's mistake and said we should go back to the Spring without his build. I asked for a game delay until the matter was resolved. The next thing the guest GM does is to print the Spring including this guy's build! I resigned from the game due to gamemaster incompetence. The Guest GM said I resigned and, of course, did not give any reason at all! Granted this is an error with two GMs involved. But one GM can just as easily dig his grave. On procedural matters it is easy to make a wrong ruling. It is worse if you compound it with another error.

If you do rule and this ruling is protested by another player then turn the matter over to the IDA Ombudsman or another GM. If you are sure you are wrong don't be afraid to retract your

ruling in favor of the correct ruling. Such a change is not vacillation it is a concern for correctness. You are only admitting that you can be wrong. Don't stand (and fall) by an incorrect decision.

If a ruling on a protest is protested it is always correct to temporarily stop the game until the issue is settled. Concern for the

continuation of the game is important but if this continuation burys the protest you may find the correct solution is also buried. Also you may find that the game may not be rated by one or more of the hobby's ratingsmasters. If there is a threat of a resignation do not play another season until you are sure who is playing the country in question.

((The best ways of avoiding protests are 1) double check everything you do, and 2) have a thoro set of house rules. The latter point is often not appreciated by novice GMs, whose attitude is "I'll cross that bridge when I get to it, and if anyone wants to know, just ask in advance." So often, it doesn't work out that way. The player simply assumes he can do it. The player sends in Spring orders conditional on whether the removal was done by the player or the GM. Is that permitted? Either way you rule, you risk that someone will think this is a very ad-hoc ruling and a protest may result. Its so much easier to point to Rule 8c, avoiding the fuss and the hard feelings....There is unfortunately, no longer any official Ombudsman to go to, so player and GM must find a mutually acceptable person to go to. Unfortunately, not all GMs accept the notion of their decisions being appealable. One of the things that a GM must remember is that players will rely on those House Rules, and will complain if you don't. I remember the very first season in my very first postal game. Austria NMRed, and the GM used neutral orders. The HRs for the zine made no mention of using neutral orders in SO1, and I didn't consider the ones to be chosen to be neutral either. So I was pretty upset! GMs also have to keep a cool head when dealing with a protest coming from a novice. These protests can be wildly emotional and very misinformed. I got a call about a year ago from a novice who was livid. The GM had refused to accept telephone orders. The GM had either not given him much of an explanation, or he had been too angry to listen. I had to explain to him that while most GMs would accept fone orders, by hobby tradition, GMs were not obligated to. But by the same token, GMs must make a sincere effort to try to see the complaint from the player's perspective, something the GM may be very reluctant to do. I had one such incident in a game with a GM who is no longer in the hobby. In SO4, one of my orders had been deleted (there was even a gap on the sheet). I sent in a correction. The GM writes back --- its my fault. The Winter 1903 "has" list forgot to include that unit, and since I didn't specifically point that out, the unit vanished.. I protested that his HRs only required that an error in "adjudication" be pointed out, and this certainly wasn't that. It was just a summary; the unit was listed in the FO3 results. And besides, I had in effect pointed it out by ordering the piece anyhow. This got me nowhere. It seemed clear to me that the GM worked from the Winter "has" list, not the FO3 adjudication, and then assumed I had ordered a unit that I didn't own. But he just wasn't going to admit that he had made a mistake; he wasn't going to see it from my point of view (and he wasn't going to accept what an Ombudsman said either). Oh well.))



((Next up is Rod Walker, writing in El Conquistador, Vol 2 #2, Sept 1975))

## RATING SYSTEMS, PLAYING STYLES, AND ANDY PHILLIPS' BLOOD PRESSURE

by Rod Walker

Diplomacy is only a game. As with any hobby, there are those who take it too seriously. Point this out to them and you will usually receive a shrug and some equivalent of "Fandom Is A Way Of Life", possibly together with some type of lecture about how you are "ruining the hobby".

One of the surest ways to "ruin the hobby" is to put out a rating system. Now, rating systems are collectively a complete waste of time. I mean COMPLETE



—and I can say that from experience, having put out two different systems already. I am also preparing to put out a third (see my forthcoming article "Lor', 'Enry, 'Ere Come Those Bloody Numbers Agayne!", in "Diplomacy World"). That is of course the secret of any hobby — it is a creative and enjoyable way to waste time, an avocation of which we humans have an inherent need.

Back to "ruining the hobby" — put out a rating system and see what happens. There is always one of the super-dedicated types who won't like it and will immediately accuse you of ruining things because all the players will now play in order to look good on your system. And because your system is warped, it will warp them and warp the game and warp the universe and all those evil and terrible things. Of course, if you read the literature you will discover that the players are doing this with all the rating systems simultaneously — if we are to take their various critics together — a supposition I find hard to swallow.

Just as a quick overview, let us look at the various systems in general. The Calhmer System rewards winning or drawing only, based on the assumption that winning the game is the object and nothing else counts. The ODD System rates your position in the game (where you finished) by transferring points from those below to those above. It also has a factor whereby those who have more lose more and gain less, relatively speaking. The Beyerlein System rates reputation. (It has been accused of being a "popularity poll", but it seems to me that one might be popular as a person while still having a reputation as a poor or average player. Or one might be known as an excellent player while being personally popular.) The Lakofka System rates a large variety of factors. The upcoming Walker System rates strength at game's end (or, more precisely, how close each player came to achieving the 18-center victory criterion).

What I want the reader to observe is this: A player who wins games with some consistency will do well under all of these systems (and under every rating system ever published). It is true that a player who wins infrequently but makes a consistent strong showing will do better under Lakofka's system or mine than he will under Calhmer's — but he will still not do as well as a consistent winner.

I will leave it to the reader's judgment whether a "strong showing" is deserving of reward under a rating system. If the reader wants a rating system to show ALL the strong players and not just the winners, he will make his judgment one way. If the reader thinks winning is all there is to playing a game ... well, we all know what HE'LL say. Big deal.

The point is this: Rating systems cannot possibly influence playing styles. Why? Because all rating systems encourage exactly the same playing style, if they encourage style at all (which I doubt). Under every rating system ever published, players who win or draw do better than players who do not. Therefore, all rating systems encourage players to seek victory or a draw. In that sense, there is no difference whatever between Calhmer's system and mine (or Lakofka's).

So what's all the fuss about?

((I would tend to agree with Rod that Rating systems don't influence styles of play (or at least, do so for so few people that we need not worry about it), but not for

the reason Rod suggests. Rating systems do not encourage the same style. Basically, there are two sorts of rating systems. Those that do not divide by the games played, and those that do. With the former, you should play in as many games as you possibly can. You'll stretch yourself awfully thin, but with the masses of games, the draws will slowly accumulate, along with an occasional win. In the second type, you should play very few games, so you can concentrate your efforts to the maximum effect. You'll only get a few wins and draws this way since you'll only be in a few games. But your credit for these games will be divided by only the small number of games you've played. With so few wins and draws, you'll do very badly in the first type of rating system. But then again, the player in a huge number of games will see his points diminished by the time his points are divided by his huge number of games.

So these two types of rating systems encourage a completely different style of play. It will also effect how a given game is played. Under the first, you'd like to get the game over with soon --- so as to make room in your schedule for a new game right away. You need as many games as you can to accumulate points. But under the second, you want to try to play the game out, trying to eke out that last advantage, perhaps moving the game from a five to a four way draw, even if it takes quite a while. There's no rush to start a new game, but you do want to do as well as possible in each one.

But the fact is, very few people have ratings uppermost in their mind when they play the game, and so, taken as a whole, ratings have only a small impact on the style of play. Probably the biggest factor is that players don't want to NMR out because, under the second type of rating system, that will harm their rating. Under the first, NMRing out is equivalent to being eliminated early, or not playing the game at all))



((And now, for actually playing the game, we turn to an overview of Russia, written by Richard Hucknall in Fall of Eagles, #17, April, 1978))

#### THE DIPLOMACY ARTICLE

#### OPENING STRATEGY FOR RUSSIA

Russia is the country with the best postal win record and consequently is the most popular country to play. Although I have won both of my postal games as Russia, I still rate it second to Austria on my preference list.

If you draw Russia and want to do well then you must be prepared to diplomate harder than you normally would when playing any other country. The reason for this is that Russia occupies about one third of the board (in area) and has four neighbours (England, Germany, Austria and Turkey) in direct opposition, not to mention having one unit more than the rest at the gamestart. Furthermore, the opening moves of both Italy and France can have deep repercussions on Russian strategy. Although he starts the game with an extra unit, this is not an advantage as Russia can be crushed so easily in the first few years by concerted action from his neighbours. My belief is that Russia's best policy in general is to fan the sparks of mistrust that exist between other countries at the gamestart until they flare up into war. He can then grind slowly westwards picking up centres here and there as the rest of the board fight between themselves.

The first decision that has to be made is whether or not to send A(Mos)-Stp or to be content with a lone fleet operating in the north. Should A(Mos) go north then this is usually anti-England and is an attempt to keep him out of Nor. To do this, Russia must be fairly sure that he will not be attacked in the south and that Rum will not be contested. He will also need to have some understanding with Germany so that he is not stood out of Swe in Autumn 1901. Given these circumstances then a move to Stp can be beneficial - but if he has miscalculated and fails to take Swe or Rum then he is dangerously weak. Goodwill towards the

German in 1901 is vital otherwise Russia can be stood out of Swe; and as I explained in my article on Germany in issue 16 Germany often uses this ploy to influence Russian opening moves.

Nor is often looked upon as England's automatic 1901 gain. Russia doesn't have to contest this but the manner in which it is taken is important. An English fleet in Nor cannot be construed as aggressive unless it is accompanied by a fleet in BAR; But an army convoyed there can be very dangerous. The fleet, should it attack in 1902, can get no further than Stp but an army has the chance to roam southwards through Fin, Liv and Mos. In both of my postal games as Russia I persuaded England to let me have Nor in 1902 in return for assistance against Germany. This proved to be good strategy as it gave me a solid base in Scandinavia and the bonus of an undefended Ber later in the game. It also enabled me to concentrate units in the more important areas of the south.

Naturally, Russia is more interested in the south than the north in 1901 and the key area here must be BLA. The most fearful thing that can happen is to see Turkey move into BLA and Arm and this must be avoided if Russia is to prosper. Unless he can be certain (and certainty is rare in Diplomacy) that Turkey will not order to BLA, then he must defend by ordering to BLA himself. A good policy is to arrange a standoff over BLA in spring 1901, and then to order F(Sev)-Rum in the autumn with support from Ukr or Gel if necessary. Conditional builds can be made on the basis that if Turkey goes into BLA in the autumn then a F(Sev) is raised and this can be even more effective if Turkey is told about the conditional builds.

Unlike all other powers, Russia is involved in both north and south in 1901. The south is initially more important but gains in this area can be used to build units to bolster the weak northern position. To be successful in the south an ally is needed and Russia has perhaps the best two alliances on the board at her disposal - either Turkey or Italy.

A Turkish alliance is ideal. The Balkans and Austria can be swiftly divided followed by Turkey moving against Italy while Russia concentrates in the north against England or Germany. The Italian alliance has the advantage that the two countries do not come into contact until the middle or end game and so only minimal trust is required. Again, it is Austria that is first for the chop and then the Balkans and finally a surrounded and outnumbered Turkey. The third alternative - an Austrian alliance - can swiftly snuff out the Turkish threat, but Russia can be left dangerously open to an Austrian stab.

In the north, Russia has to go warily until he is strong enough to mount either a land war against Germany or a sea war against England. Perhaps the worst thing that can happen is for England and Germany to form a strong alliance. Not only will this hamper Russia in Scandinavia but will also stunt the growth of France; a natural Russian ally. Although there is only occasional joint action involving France and Russia, the existence of a France that is strong and healthy is to the advantage of Russia.

Enjoy yourself when you play Russia. Statistics show that you have the best chance of winning but you still have to work for it.

((This essay focuses to a large degree on the relationship between northern and southern considerations. I think Russian players err when they consider the first order of business to be resolving the RAT triangle. First you ought to decide whether to have a low profile in the south (and thus send one army to Stp), or a high profile there (both armies south). The first plan is more plausible than you may think. The south east has no "Belgium" which tends to force the alliance issue early. Also, Austria

may be so preoccupied with resolving matters with Italy and getting his two builds that he may be happy to put off real choices until 1902. So a low profile Russia may suit him just fine. In the meantime, Russia can be lining up an ally against England. At gamestart, I always raise the possibility of A Mos-StP with both G and F, in part to see if there's any interest, and in part because I don't want E to take me for granted. All too many Russian players will consider A Mos-StP only if F or G raises the topic --- and by then, he may be committed in the south.

Richard suggests an attack on Germany as early as 1902 if Russia can be paid off with Norway. That's a good deal for Russia, and a reasonable payoff for the risks involved. My experience has been that early R-G wars are ruinous for Russia unless there is a strong alliance with England. The great majority of Russian wins involve either an RQ war in midgame, or no major one at all, and most writers suggest trying to get along with Germany as long as possible. I should add for the sake of completeness one exception, viz, the article on Russia written by Melinda Holley in, of all places, the Novice publication "Masters of Deceit". That essay is largely based on an opening in which Russia deliberately provokes war with A War-Sil. She also suggests in the same opening that you "must lie thru your teeth to Turkey" in order to enter B1a also in S01. I frankly think that most novices are going to go down in flames with such an incredibly aggressive opening stance. I think Richard is on a better track. If you want an early war with Germany, get paid for it, and make sure your 1901 neutrals are already soured away.

Richard suggests Russia go warily in the north until he is really strong enuf. This advice I think applies more to Germany than to England. Once war has begun with Germany, it's fairly hard to disengage if something has been taken. By contrast, once you have taken Nwy, the war can often be ended right there, especially if England has problems with France, which tends to pull him away from Scandinavia. From Russia's perspective, the next center (Edi) is going to take quite some effort. And England won't find the loss of Nwy all that threatening. By contrast, the first center Russia takes from Germany immediately exposes another. In 1980AY, after I took Nwy, it was fairly easy to call a truce. I could then use that build in the south.))



((There's not much room left, so I'll close with this press release from Platypus Pie #9, July 1972, by Mike Rocamora in S02 for 1972 AR))

Moscow: Russia today declared was and intentions to the other players. I don't like to lie, and refuse to double deal, so I'm laying my cards on the table. I refuse to double deal, but I intend to win. I will do this by attacking Germany at the first possible moment, after driving the English and Turkish to their knees. Actually, I think that anyone who tells anyone else that they don't want to attack them, ever, is foolish and stupid. I know that Germany in particular would stab me as soon as he got the chance, so I am simply declaring my intentions. Since there is no way to stop me, why not be honest about it? ((In fact, in that very season Germany, the under strong attack by England, took time out for A Ber-Sil. In F02, Ger tried to take War and joined F against E, while Russia battled Turkey and supported an non-existent English attack on G. Germany took Swe in 1903, and in 1904, R actually helped Germany retake Mun from Italy, and in 1905, after all that press about hitting E, T, and G, Russia stabbed Austria! With Germany joining in on the attack! 72AR was a chaotic game; somebody should write a history of it some day, especially dealing with the French strategy. By F09, France had both F Bar and F Eas!))